



JOHN BULL AT THE ITALIAN OPERA.

L. 1890 and the Illustration of the Day, London, Jan 21, 1891.

THOMAS ROWLANDSON



THOMAS ROWLANDSON

by

ART YOUNG



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ROWLANDSON PLATES (Color)

JOHN BULL AT THE ITALIAN OPERA

THE POSTING INN

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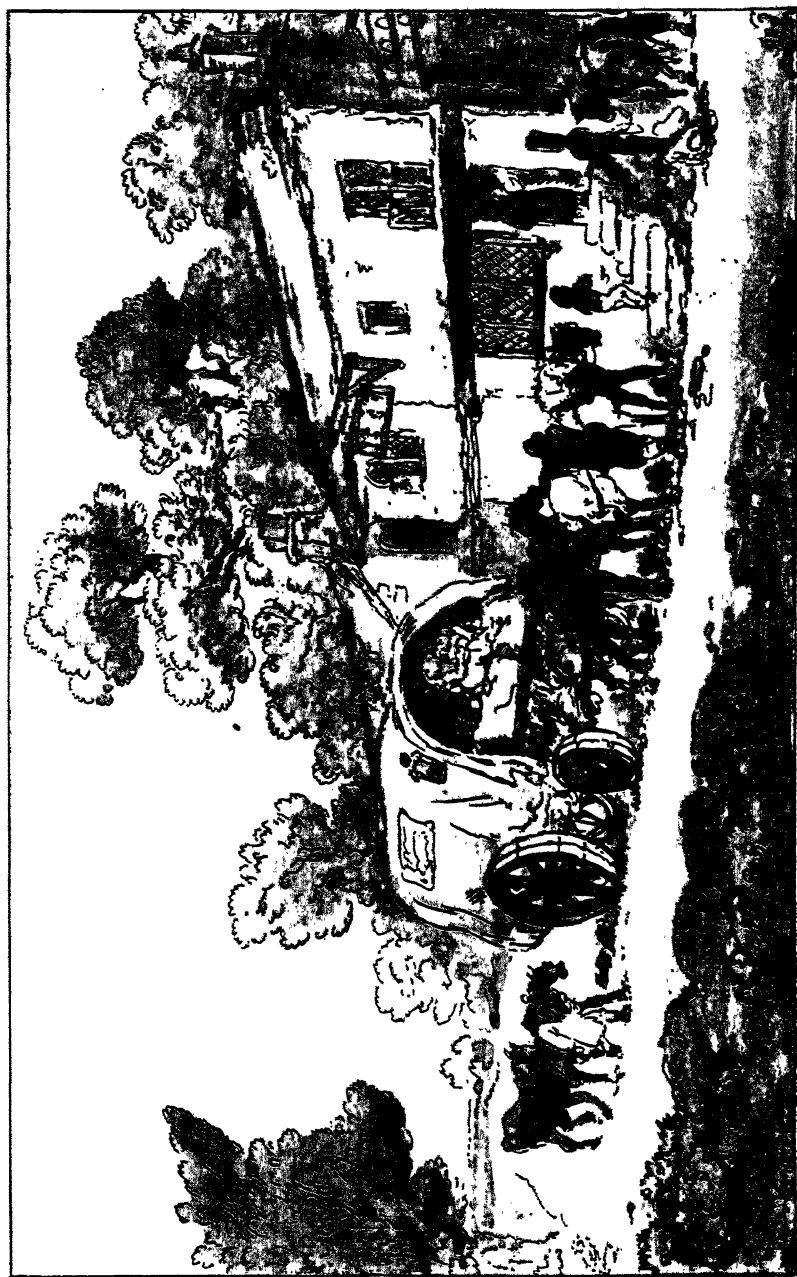
RACING

THE CHAMBER OF GENIUS

THE SCULPTOR

ROWLANDSON PLATES (Black and White)

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THE POSTING INN

THOMAS ROWLANDSON

by

ART YOUNG

I

TOPICAL CARICATURE, known in our time as cartooning, came into its own in the days of Thomas Rowlandson, who flourished during the reign of George III. His life stretched across the eventful decades which included the loss of the American colonies by England, the French Revolution, and the rise and fall of Napoleon Bonaparte. Earlier that form of pictorial expression had been regarded as a step-child of the arts. It had its beginning around the year 1330, when an Italian painter named Cristofani Buonamico, known also to readers of Boccaccio by the nickname Buffalmacco, drew grotesque characters with sentences coming from their mouths.

Such drawings appeared occasionally in various countries through the intervening centuries, but not until the end of the eighteenth did the art of caricature become a vital force in human affairs. It was given particular recognition and momentum in London, where the output of Rowlandson and his contemporaries was prodigious. They followed in the wake of William Hogarth.

The list of those contemporaries is long, but how many of them are remembered at all? Whimsical, satirical, comical; and sentimental pictures of news, manners, and politics were turned

out in that era by a host of industrious craftsmen, among whom were Gillray, Bunbury, Nixon, Isaac Cruikshank, Woodward, Dighton, Wigstead, Collings, Heath, and Seymour. The latter was the first illustrator of Dickens, but he also produced in Rowlandson's time. Most of these men are so little known now that it might be said they worked in vain. Of the whole number, only three or four are apt to have a familiar ring for art lovers—Gillray, Woodward, Seymour, and perhaps Bunbury. One seldom hears of Isaac Cruikshank though the name of his son George, who became celebrated a generation later, crops up continually in all sorts of items listed in out-of-print book dealers' catalogues.

When Rowlandson and his world moved into the nineteenth century, photography was unknown, but people were nevertheless hungry for optical excitement; the easiest way to understand life will always be through the eye. They wanted pictures, and in the absence of cameras, penny post-cards, and movies, they naturally turned to those commentators on human events, the gifted draftsmen and caricaturists.

Today topical illustration by artists has waned almost to the vanishing point. It is now almost entirely allotted to the photographers—pictures of fires, battles, bathing beauties, parades, campaigning politicians, conventions, young women ballyhooing Straw Hat Week or Potato Week, club-women patriotically denouncing the reds, movie actresses en route to Reno, open-mouthed dictators shouting to awed multitudes, kidnapers shielding their faces, visiting foreigners, royalty in exile, a President or his wife going somewhere, pausing somewhere, or returning from somewhere.

But such exactitude as can be obtained with the gelatine film can never be made to fill the place left by the pictorial limners of old, with their pith and insight and unhesitating emphasis on

essentials. We have reason to be thankful to whatever gods there be, that the creations of such men as Rowlandson have been preserved for posterity. For when contrasted with today's photo-realism they show that the eye of a camera is a poor substitute for the human eye and interpretative art.

With overwhelming insistence, photography has become a baneful influence on all that is creative and best in pictorial expression. Photography is not an art. I do not deny the popular belief that the camera is one of the greatest inventions of the last century. It has its admirable uses, and a photographer can simulate art, but he cannot make it. When one of his craft feels that a scene he is taking has balance and is good enough to snap then he is a good artistic hunter after composition who knows when to shoot. But nothing is art that is not nature, seen through the retina and registered with the creative faculties of the brain, by hand; thus one communicates his selective and discriminating vision through various media to others.

That is why the drawn pictures, the etchings of the pre-camera days, landscapes and street scenes, or the woodcuts of life in old New York or London, by artists in *Harper's Weekly* and the *London Graphic* are so much more engrossing to contemplate than photographs of the same scenes would be. To see with your own eyes and to depict your observations from an individual viewpoint is to be a real artist, even if a crude one. A photograph shows everything, whether you want to see it or not. An artist captures confusion and selects what he needs. The photograph, however, detracts nothing from chaos unless it is doctored, which of course requires artistic skill but never wholly redeems it.

Graphic art today is in need of a revived appreciation, not only because of its significant past, but for its timely possibilities. It is true, of course, that among the advertisement-fed mag-

azines produced for the prosperous, there are occasional excellences on the art pages. There is good comedy and good ridicule, though all too often lacking in penetration. But most of the output in this field is banal and ephemeral, fit only to toss around in the crazy carnival of waste.

II

Who was this artist Thomas Rowlandson?

He was born in London, in the crowded section called Old Jewry, in the summer of 1756. Of his mother we know nothing, but his father was a merchant and manufacturer of middle class origin, who speculated a good deal in commodities and was frequently in financial difficulties. Thomas had a sister, who became the wife of Samuel Howitt, an artist favorably recognized for his sporting scenes.

Across the years of this boy's early childhood the hands of circumstance have drawn a dark curtain. If in after days he ever told any of his intimates about his juvenile reactions to the surroundings of the Ghetto none of them ever took the trouble to put those memories on paper for a later age to read. But in that quarter of the great city, in every narrow street, was the roar of many voices. It is a certainty that this artist-to-be must have been sub-consciously influenced by the intensity of what he saw all about him.

His father was a restless man of commercial affairs; and it seems probable, from the absence of any reference to her, that his mother died when Thomas was quite young. With the elder Rowlandson occupied extensively with his speculative ventures, likely his son began his education in the tumultuous streets. How much did he know up to the age of nine outside the boundaries of Old Jewry, and how much if anything about the world outside the metropolis? London, famed so widely as changeless, had



LUXURY.

Pub. Dec. 20 1794 by S.W. Pines, No. 10. 10. 10.



MISERY.

1. LUXURY—MISERY



COMFORTS OF BATH.
26

3. COMFORTS OF BATH



COMEDY IN THE COUNTRY.



TRAGEDY IN LONDON.

S.B. May 29 1807 by 'The Grigg N. 11' Chesford — one sitting corner

Rev. J. P. S. S. S. S.



5. ETCHING AFTER A DRAWING BY RAPHAEL



Rowlandson 1799

THE FAIR BATHER

6. THE FAIR BATHER

Boucher



DAYS OF PROSPERITY IN GLOUCESTER PLACE OR A KEPT MISTRESS *in High Feather.*

7. DAYS OF PROSPERITY IN GLOUCESTER PLACE OR A KEPT MISTRESS IN HIGH FEATHER



A TAILORS WEDDING.

been stirring itself in recent years. In 1753 the British Museum had been established and a Society of Arts founded. In 1760-61 eight of the gates in the ancient walls around the city were removed, and a new show of welcome was held out to strangers from the hinterland. New roads were being built and projected, and principal streets repaved.

Thomas's birth-year had been a bitter one for all patriotic Englishmen. For it marked the recapture of Calcutta by a native army; and the overnight horror of the Black Hole, a dungeon about eighteen feet square, into which 146 of the British were thrown, and from which only twenty-three came out alive next morning. Lord Robert Clive had retaken Calcutta in six months, but the nation's revenge was not complete; desire to wipe out unnumbered East Indians would be manifest among Britons for decades to come.

Hangings at Tyburn were public events, and men were still executed for stealing such a trifle as seventeen pounds of candles. Hawkers on the busy corners plied a brisk trade in Last Dying Speeches of gallows-victims; those speeches often being fabricated by some hack-writer if the words of the hanged one were not sufficiently pious and repentant.

George III had been crowned in 1761. There was horse-racing at Ascot, and cock-fighting and pugilism here and there around the town.

III

Young Thomas had ambition; and his father was ambitious for him. So at the age of nine he began living at Soho Academy, a boarding school of polite learning in Soho Square, of which the Rev. Cuthbert Barwis, A.M., was head. Rowlandson the elder is described as "respectable", and the academy was designed to fit the sons of respectable Englishmen to be gentlemen. The boy's

home was only three miles away to the East, but what a vast distance it seemed—and what a gulf between. People in the vicinity of the school were better dressed than most of those around his birthplace, looked different, talked differently.

In this new world he met other youngsters from what are called good families. Richard Burke, son of Edmund Burke, M.P., was one, and another was John Thomas Smith, who afterward became keeper of the print department in the British Museum, where he was known to many generations of students as “Antiquity” Smith. It was he who first discovered the genius of William Blake. . . . But particularly Thomas made friends with Jack Bannister and Henry Angelo, who vied with each other in making pencil and pen sketches. He disclosed that he too had tried drawing at home. They took readily to him; he was husky and game for anything. But his surname was too long, and they promptly shortened it to “Rowly.”

Often the lad from Old Jewry would pause in his studies to sketch a face in the classroom that interested him, and in time the margins of his text-books were filled with such sketches, of the master and of other students. Meanwhile he drank in the tales told by Bannister and Angelo about their experiences and their dreams of the future. Angelo’s father was Royal Fencing Master; he had stories to tell of the antics of the nobility. Bannister’s sire was an actor who was appearing in various theatres. Jack didn’t know yet what he wanted to be; he was trying to find himself.

Table fare in the school fluctuated in quality from day to day according to the amount of money in its treasury, Dr. Barwis being a better educator than business man. Once it became so poor that an indignation meeting was held by the students, and they appointed a delegation, headed by Jack Bannister, to protest. The master was sympathetic, and answered that if the parents of some of his pupils would pay their bills with less delay he

could provide them with decent food. This was embarrassing to the protest leader, since "Honest Charles" Bannister, an im-provident fellow, was one of the chief delinquents.

But the three chums got sufficient food, and month by month their knowledge broadened. In due course, across four or five years, they displayed a lively interest in other manifestations of the artistic—acting, music, dancing, sculpture, literature.

After he had absorbed all that the Barwis school could offer, Rowly entered the Royal Academy to study drawing. It was then in Somerset House. First he was put into the "plaster academy", the everyday name for the antique department, where one was compelled to draw from ancient statuary. That department was always stuffy and unreal, the hollow eyes in the white but more or less soiled casts giving them a sightless look. But the new student applied himself diligently to the task in hand, not because he had any liking for this phase of his education, but in order to get through it quickly and attain the life class. . . . Few artists have ever liked drawing from the antique. *The Dying Slave* might be meritorious sculpture, but to make a copy of it was tiresome—the young artist longed for the posturing of a live model; one who knew how to pose like an expiring slave, even if he could not hold his position quite so still and so long as a plaster-of-paris cast.

When the life class opened its doors to him he made notable progress; and in a little while was excelling John Mortimer, prize pupil there, as a draftsman of the nude. At this stage he gave marked evidence of that gift of graceful line and facile execution which grew into the distinctive style that ultimately took on the name of Rowlandson.

Here, too, were Bannister and Angelo. Jack was wavering between the stage and painting as a career, and was still experimenting with pictures. The three inseparables were big lads

now. They bubbled over with animal spirits, and when of an evening they moved about town in a prankish mood their activities for the hours ahead were as unpredictable to themselves as to onlookers. *Drury Lane* and *Covent Garden* theatres held great attraction for them. Bannister's father was in a position to arrange free entree, and thus they were able to see the best of the prevailing drama.

This waggish trio and the nature of their drolleries were a constant source of amusement and chagrin to their fellow students and masters respectively. Henry Angelo, in his reminiscences, regales us with details of two incidents:

"Bannister, who at this time drew in the plaster academy, not having gained the step that admitted to the drawing from the life, used to amuse Moser (the keeper of Somerset House) with his mimicry, and he was, indeed, a pet of the worthy keeper.

"One evening, observing that the student had vacated his seat at his desk, the keeper went to seek him, and hearing an unusual giggling and confusion in the basement story he descended to learn the cause; when he discovered the young artist romping with the servant maids.

" 'What are you doing, sir, hey?' inquired the keeper, taking him gently by the ear; 'why are you not at the cast? You are an idler, sir.' Bannister met his reproof with an arch smile, and whispered, knowingly, 'No, kind sir, I only came down to study from the *life*!' "

And then we learn that Rowlandson "once gave great offense by carrying a pea-shooter into the life academy, and while old Moser was adjusting the female model, and had just directed her contour, Rowlandson let fly a pea, which, making her start, she threw herself entirely out of position, and interrupted the gravity of the study for the whole evening. For this offense, Master Rowlandson went near getting himself expelled."

IV

Before he was sixteen Rowly went to Paris to study. His father's brother Thomas, who was his godfather, had married a young Frenchwoman named Chattelier. Now a widow, she welcomed her stalwart nephew with open arms, took keen pride in his talent, and saw that he had all possible comforts. For the greater part of two years he worked industriously in the French capital, accomplishing a surprising amount of solid production, but spending many an evening with gay companions—an English youth turned *boulevardier*.

His aunt was well-to-do and generous with her money. Thomas lived extravagantly amid the shimmer of Paris in those days of the reign of Louis XV. And it is related that during this period "he occasionally permitted his satiric talents the indulgence of portraying the characteristics of that fantastic people, whose *outré* habits scarcely demanded the exaggerations of caricature."

Amid the art treasures of the ancient city by the Seine, the boy also was among the dangers of an environment of untrammelled pleasure in a time when morality was merely a phrase. Had he not been endowed with a large amount of common sense and an unswerving determination to succeed as an artist, Paris might have been his undoing. Though he went to drawing school with ardor and applied himself steadfastly for long stretches during which he drew from the model and painted, he allowed himself the pleasant relaxations of fashionable distractions and developed a passion for the gaming table, where he lost more frequently than he won. But his indulgent aunt continued to pay the bills.

In spite of this allurements, his London reputation as a student of great promise was maintained; no one could excel him in thorough draftsmanship and fervor for the true line. He was

known at the *Bibliothèque Nationale*, as he was at the British Museum, where he had often gone to study the engravings of old masters, as the assiduous young man who filled one sketch-book after another with drawings of effortless skill. His heroes in the world of art were Rubens, Boucher, Andrea del Sarto, Raphael, Claude Lorrain, and all such eminent masters of the fluent line. Besides, there is evidence that he admired Teniers, Van Ostade, Callot, and those artists who went mostly among the proletariat for their inspiration.

The first source from which young Rowlandson equipped his mind was the natural scene, filling his sketch-books while looking on at life. Then, with penetrating interest, he learned how other artists had interpreted nature, and as a duck takes to water, he swam into the rhythmic manner of design characteristic of the masters I have mentioned, a technique of pictorial construction which might be termed a love of the abundant life. The contour of all that is included in the composition of a picture—trees that are breezed; hills that roll; women who are graceful and full-bosomed; fat lecherous-looking old men; horses that gallop; and dancing which goes round and round. This style of draftsmanship Rowly accepted as his own.

While in Paris he did many paintings in oil, for he loved color and was adept at chiaroscuro; but his inclination was always toward linear draftsmanship. The line was his natural way of expressing himself, but he wanted to prove that he could paint creditable pictures, full of the qualities which a conventional world expects and demands in a work of art.

V

After two years in Paris, where he learned to speak French "like a bloody Frenchman", Rowlandson returned to London and again attended the Royal Academy, where he delightedly

resumed companionship with Bannister and Angelo. Here, too, in 1775, he began to exhibit landscapes, portraits of lovely women, and subject pictures. These exhibits hung on the same walls with the creations of Romney, Gainsborough, Moreland, and Reynolds, who was then president of the Academy. Despite his youth Thomas was accepted and recognized as a painter of outstanding merit, both in water-color and in oil. In those days water-colors were known as "stained drawings", the prevailing style consisting of an outline sketch done in sepia with a brush or quill pen, over which the color was brushed or "stained."

Angelo, in his memoirs, cites what he considers a flaw in the technique of his old friend. He regards Rowlandson's attitude toward fundamentals as a bit too casual.

"His studies from the human figure . . . in so masterly a style, would have excelled," Angelo asserts, "had his subsequent study kept pace with the fecundity of his invention. . . . His misfortune, indeed, was, as I have been assured by capable authorities who noticed his juvenile progress, that of possessing too ready an invention; this rare faculty, strange as it may seem, however desirable to the poet, often the bane of a painter. . . .

"The painter, however easily he may conceive the structure of a mighty building, be it a temple or be it a ship—must describe the subject perfectly with all its parts; he must set to work *doggedly*, as the great lexicographer, Johnson, said, and labor at the thing with the patience of a philosopher. Rowlandson's . . . uncontrollable spirit . . . took its excursive flights . . . sweeping up over the prescribed pale . . . and caught its theme on the wing.

"Few persons—judging from the careless style of drawing and etching which he so finally indulged in, too soon, after acquiring the first rudiments of his art—would believe the possibility of his being the author of some of his earlier designs; for although all

are too slight, yet there are certain subjects of his composition carried through with a compatibility of style so truly original, and so replete with a painter-like feeling, that Sir Joshua Reynolds and Sir Benjamin West pronounced them wonders of art."

Angelo's comment is worth noting, and partly true. But that which looks easy and careless in a picture at first glance is not necessarily an offense against art.

In 1776 Rowlandson took a studio in Wardour street, a couple of blocks from Soho Square. It was about this time, before he was twenty-one, that his father suffered a disastrous failure, and the young artist was thrown completely upon his own resources. But not long afterward his aunt, Mme. Chattelier-Rowlandson, died in Paris and left him a legacy of £7,000, which was a good deal of money for an artist to have within reach, and much plate, jewelry, and other property.

He worked hard in the new studio, and remained in Wardour street until 1781. In this period he often painted beautiful women, and here he was in his element. His showings until 1784 were generally in a serious vein. There is record of a portrait he did of George III, but I can find no indication that the king posed for it.

VI

But now the Continent called to him again. He was always eager for new sights, a romantic, though with an underlying earnestness of purpose. On this excursion he was accompanied by a congenial print-collector named Mitchell, who was a partner in a banking house, and who acted as the artist's financial adviser. Their rambles led them through Flanders and Germany, where Rowly made sketches of town and country folk, gay and somber; traveling noblemen with their equipages, peasants in lumbering carts. He was devoted to the drawing of horses, depicting them with verve and fidelity.

Whether Mr. Mitchell guided his friend toward the making of profitable investments with this fortune is not clear, but he made no marked effort to curb Rowly's gambling tendencies, as some moralistic observers think he should have done. When they returned to London the green board beckoned to the artist anew. He needed diversion, the thrill of chance in the dice-throw, the matching of wits over cards, the merry clink of glasses, and the sparkle of raillery in a smoke-wreathed salon. For by this time he was counted as one of the sporting crowd which followed in the wake of the Prince of Wales (who later became George IV), and which included Bannister and Angelo, and various rakes and other amusing characters. . . . Often in those days he would play through a whole night and all next day, pausing only at long intervals for food and drink.

When luck passed him by and he lost all, he would pull a pencil from his pocket, hold it at arm's length, and say: "Here's my magic wand, my divining rod. I'll go and find more gold with it." Next day, having rested, he would plan a new series of pictures, and presently money would be flowing in again. If he needed cash, to tide him over temporarily, his word was good wherever he was known. But remembering his father's financial troubles, he was careful to avoid debt.

VII

There have been laments, and one hears them even yet, that at the age of 29, Rowlandson definitely abandoned serious painting and turned to caricature—and that thus a potentially great painter was lost to the world. But other artists who showed large promise as painters in youthful days also have swung to different media—and more often than not, for economic reasons. Apparently society cannot, or will not, support all the artists of pronounced talent who come into this world.

For the last forty years, the supply of artists has outrun the demand in all countries. But artists persist. More painters and illustrators are turned out today by the schools than ever before; more young people want to be creative in the arts in the hope of escape from routine jobs, and the tiresome exactions of the machine age. Especially hard-hit are the picture artists; the dealer is apt to have no room for their offerings, and the publisher says, "Why hire artists, when photographs are cheaper?" In New York and other cities artists have been compelled to exhibit their work on the streets like peddlers. This is a strange anomaly when we consider that most laymen know instinctively that there is not much art in shooting a view with a machine, but feel that there is something magical in making a picture "by hand."

We may reasonably believe that Rowlandson had reached a conviction that his art must be self-supporting, despite the wind-fall from Paris. Having been born for action, he may well have found that painting was too slow and was inadequate as an outlet for one of his temperament. He loved beauty, and, as I have said, painted women with rather a sense of worship. But he was living largely in a man's world, and he must have come to see that beside the romance in a maiden's eye or in the delicate curves of a half-concealed bosom, the lives of the people embraced unlovely elements—irony, tragedy, hypocrisy, self-seeking, frustration, deception, and defeat—all the way from the cradle to the grave.

Whether or not he had in his consciousness any clear message to impart to his fellow-men, he wanted to be a moving part of all this struggle, to portray it, to capture in permanent form the whimsical *tableaux* fashioned by Fate. Caricature was the obvious, the ideal medium for running comment on human affairs. Hogarth, earlier in the century, had created a demand for it; and Gillray was busy making it a rounded tradition. When one made

a painting on canvas, however worthy, only a comparatively few persons ever saw it—and those mostly of the elect. But when one etched a scene on copper, it was possible to make a hundred or more marketable copies of the picture in a few hours, and if it had merit people all over London might enjoy it next day. For the products of this facile method were displayed not only in art store windows, where crowds often gathered to chuckle over comment on current happenings, but also in the windows of other shops, and in the clubs, coffee-houses, and taverns scattered across the city.

Once the decision had been made, Rowlandson faced straight ahead. His academic background and dexterity and crisp manner of notation immediately pitched him to the fore where even Gillray could not excel him, except in pictures that were weird and fantastic. The first two offerings in the new vein, which quickly gained attention, were entitled *French Review* and *English Review*. These were displayed on the walls of the Royal Academy in 1786, but later disappeared, to the regret of many admirers, into the private collection of the Prince. Much of Rowlandson is now hidden away in Windsor Castle, among what is known as the George IV collection. It is no secret that Thomas produced for the same royal patron a series of drawings “notoriously of free tendency as regards subject.” The new king could do a fine service for art-lovers if he would make that hidden collection accessible to the people at large.

Rowly spent much of his play-time in the famous pleasure palaces of London, particularly the Vauxhall, and the unrestrained life in those centers gave him inspiration for many curious and effective erotic pictures. One hundred and seven engravings of this type by him are among the *erotica* assembled by Sir H. Spencer Ashbee, London bibliographer, who spent a lifetime and a fortune in searching out art and literary works

dealing with sex in England. Other drawings of similar nature by the same hand are in the British Museum library and the South Kensington Museum. Ten etchings which have to do with amatory diversions, issued singly in 1810, were published by J. C. Hotten as a small brochure, now rare, in 1872. This bears the title: *Pretty Little Games for Young Ladies and Gentlemen. With Pictures of Good Old English Sports and Pastimes. By T. Rowlandson.* A few copies only printed for the artist's friends."

In earlier years, before he had turned away from painting, Rowly had created not a few joyous and amusing prints, including *The Amputation*, which shows a surgeon operating on a patient with saws, hammers, pinchers, and other formidable and fearsome tools of the profession. Another was *The School for Eloquence*, a view of a fashionable parlor in which a debating club is holding forth, with animated discussions of Tory, Whig, Republican, and revolutionary theories coloring the air. Just as it is today, the world was then in a ferment of political and economic change.

VIII

Rowlandson was a product of a full-blooded, hard-drinking, hard-hitting epoch. No apologist for his pleasuring was he. Some Londoners who knew him in his twenties describe him as enormous to look at. When he was traveling inn-keepers' wives would look askance at his big frame as he came in, perhaps stooping in a low doorway, and would begin mentally calculating on the danger of the larder running bare. And when they saw his capacity as he ate, their fears were confirmed, and they would hasten to send for another round of beef.

Portraits of himself—his own and others—reveal a face rather Romanesque, large eyes, strong nose, with a jutting lower lip. In later life it was said that he could have been his own model for

the traditional "John Bull." He was adventurous, and soundly healthy. He would work hard in his studio, but after his evening meal, often would set out for one of the fashionable gaming parlors to make a night of it. "'Ere's Rowly!" meant that the evening had begun. The towering *bon vivant* would hail his waiting comrades whole-heartedly but without lessening the dignity which cloaked him like a mantle, and with no delay would repair to his favorite game of the moment. Here he would sit for hours, lost in the enchanting business of trying to combine mental skill with luck, winning or losing with no display of emotion.

Joseph Grego, in his biography of Rowlandson, tells of discussing his subject with George Cruikshank in the late Eighteen Seventies. Cruikshank, whose father had been a friend of Rowly, was then near his life's end. He thought Rowlandson "somewhat unreflecting, and reckless in exposing the infirmities of others . . . and had suffered himself to be led away from the exercise of his legitimate subjects, to produce works of a reprehensible tendency." What these reprehensible works were is not explained. Were they, perhaps, the racy pictures that Thomas made for the Prince of Wales? Or were they prints of wider circulation, which publicized in not unfavorable light the care-free lives of roysterers and wantons? Cruikshank in his younger days had used the harpoons of ridicule and satire against individuals who may have had sensitive feelings, and had been able to see pleasant humor in the sowing of wild oats. Also he illustrated one edition of John Cleland's novel, *Fanny Hill, or the Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*, sold, with whispers, to numberless connoisseurs in the back rooms of book stores specializing in *curiosa*. . . . Having been a hard drinker and a gay boy himself, he turned virtuous when elderly, and became a passionate advocate of abstinence from liquor, lecturing in halls around London on the sterling advantages of water-drinking.

IX

In Rowlandson's generation, which covered the same span of years as the mystic poet, artist, and engraver, William Blake, the graphic artists, like the literary craftsmen, were generally moralists who propagandized for the "good old" virtues. They had as a conspicuous example the drawings of William Hogarth, first caricaturist of eminence in England, who died at the age of sixty-seven in 1764. While there is a considerable element of humor in his work, he was much concerned about the spiritual welfare of the public, and most of his pictures are sermons. He painted and engraved *The Rake's Progress* and *The Harlot's Progress*, and with pictorial eloquence sought to prove that the wages of sin is death. In *Marriage a la Mode* he argued that to deceive meant misery in the end, and held that a just reward awaited one who was honest and worked hard like *The Industrious Apprentice*. Hogarth spent a great deal of time in sermonizing on the duty of good conduct, and of course he too had precedent for this: For what were the artists of the Renaissance but preachers in paint? And had not Shakespeare moralized—and was he not an artist?

Being at heart a playboy, Rowlandson for many years paid little attention to the pattern set by those of his tribe who reminded people about the Ten Commandments and the sure roads to Heaven or Hell. He kept his banners for the free life flying: to him the free life was the good life. It is true that after he passed the half-century mark some of his assaults on "evil", in the *Dance of Death* and other works, were suggestive of the pulpit. But sham, pomposity, debauchery, and wickedness generally were just subjects for pictures. Hogarth before him and later Daumier in France were solidly serious despite their keen insight for the comic.

It took no overweening conceit for him to know that he was

an unusually gifted man. This is borne out by the fact that he undertook work which would have overwhelmed his fellow artists. But it is doubtful if he had a real critical appreciation of himself. He enjoyed creating pictures, and that was enough; others could decide about his rating as an artist.

But no true artist can be completely divorced from the thought and prejudices of his day. The abstract thought of Rowlandson's age was based on religious ethics as the Church and other predominant institutions defined them. Good and bad behavior in humble or high stations of life, was a matter of self-adjustment to the Biblical code. Society as a whole had no part in determining one's personal conduct.

Satire was directed against the follies and sins of individuals. Whatever happened to one was due to his own will or lack of it. A miser, a voluptuary, or any other malefactor, was breaking Biblical injunctions, if not laws enacted by Parliament. The man who owed money and could not pay should go to jail; the thief should be hanged for yielding to temptation; and both should go to Hell, according to the Church. Dickens voiced the social attitude through Podsnap: "It's their own fault." It was the old Adam—original sin—that caused some people to act wickedly while others were good because they would not succumb to the Devil. . . . Caricature and ridicule of those who went wrong was one way to reform and redeem the human race.

Though we still hold the individual responsible, a great change has taken place. "Sin" is now known by sociologists to be largely a question of environment. Even the bad behavior of royalty or statesmen is not so malignant as the bad behavior of the money-power which rules royalty and statesmen. In short, it's the money-madness of the profit system which is the main source of evil, from which no one can escape. It is the wholesale maker of thieves, liars, beggars, sycophants, and prostitutes.

Most of our professional opinionists still stress the old idea of personal responsibility. But a truer sense of proportion between the liability of self and the anti-social forces which surround self is steadily developing. One hundred years after Rowlandson, the issue is between those who still believe that the "inner self" can determine one's behavior for good or evil and those who believe that we are conditioned mainly by environment and economic pressure.

X

I found no evidence that the young Rowlandson drew cartoons for or against the American Revolution, although such pictures, from both viewpoints, were published in London and Dublin and were smuggled into the Colonies, most of them being in support of the revolt. At that time, of course, Thomas was still a painter, and devoting himself to conventional subjects. So far his cartoons had been few. It must be remembered also that that war did not concern the people of England as a whole nearly so much as it did the people along our Atlantic seaboard. The colonists had vastly more at stake than their parent country. America was far away and the English at home had their own lives to live.

Just one cartoon touching on the conflict in America is cited among the hundreds of Rowlandson's pictures described by Grego, who is his principal biographer. Done in 1781, this is entitled *The State Watchman Discovered by the Genius of Great Britain Studying Plans for the Reduction of America*. It shows the somnolent Lord North, whose administration was conducting the war, asleep on a sofa, dreaming, according to the artist, of new theories for the recovery of the Colonies.

In so far as politics was concerned, Rowly's temperament was not partisan, and he flung ridicule without consistency. But in 1784 there was an upheaval in British politics which created a

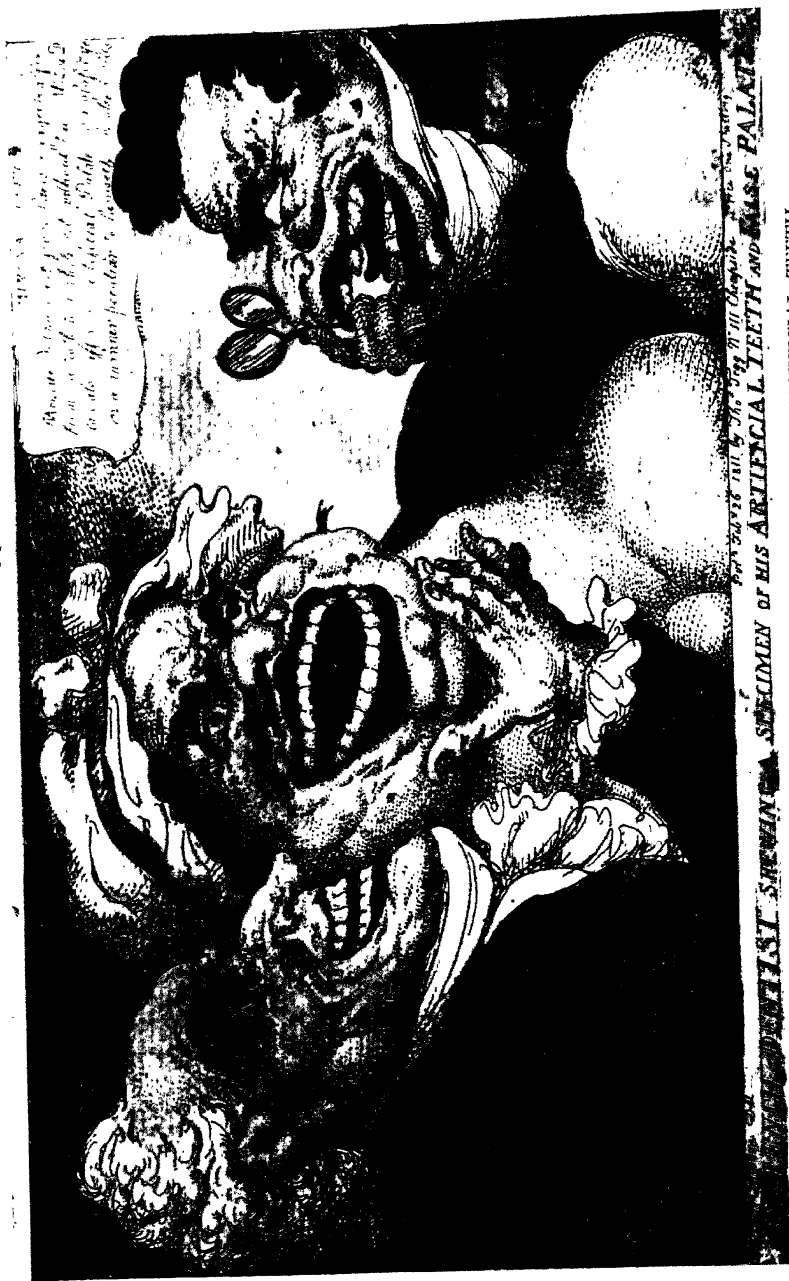


BOOKSELLER & AUTHOR

*Oh shame on the wretch who follows
till we when we are fast them*



A VIEW ON THE BANKS OF THE THAMES.



10. A FRENCH DENTIST SHEWING A SPECIMEN OF HIS ARTIFICIAL TEETH AND FALSE PALATES



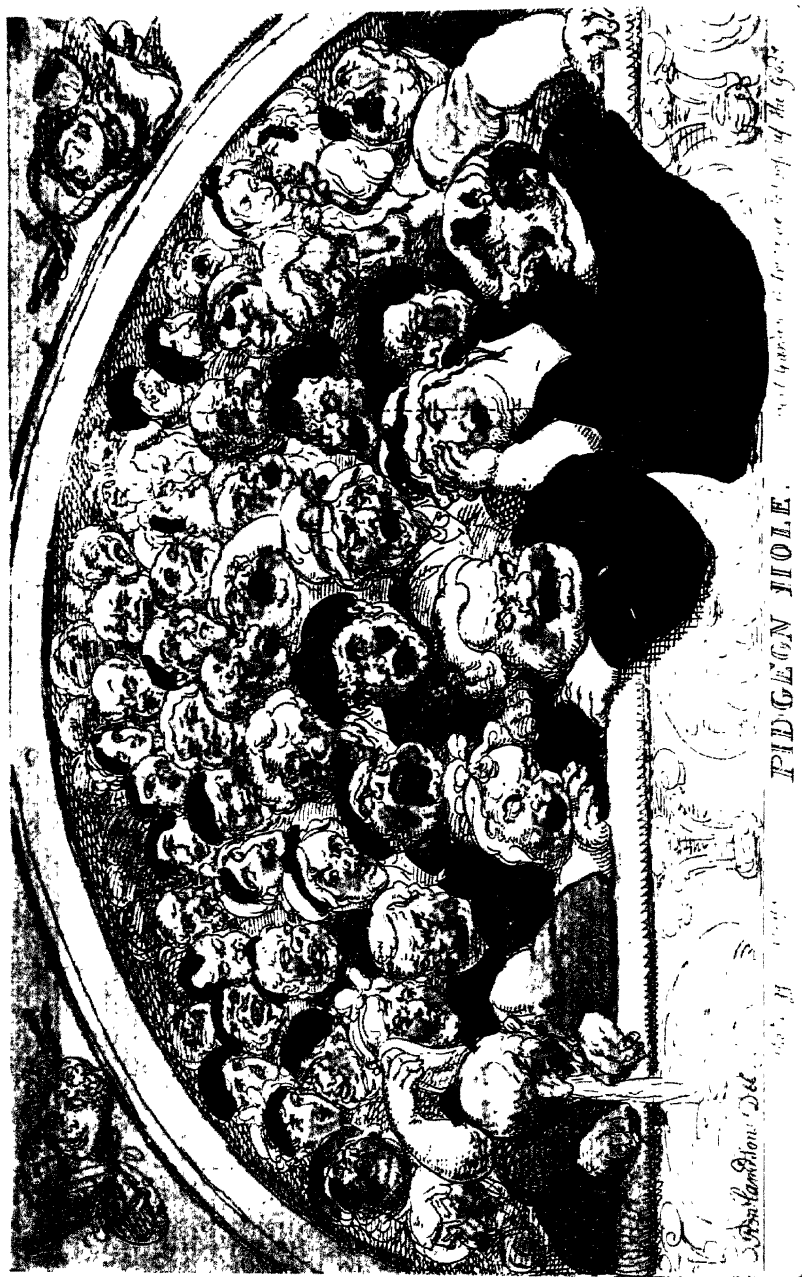
Sir JOHN BARLEYCORN—MISS HOP—(and their only Child)—MASTER PORTER
Dedicated to the Publishers of *London*, by W. Egg "Quadrice"

11. SIR JOHN BARLEYCORN—MISS HOP—(AND THEIR ONLY CHILD) MASTER PORTER





13. EMBARKING



PIDGEON HOLE.

14. PIDGEON HOLE

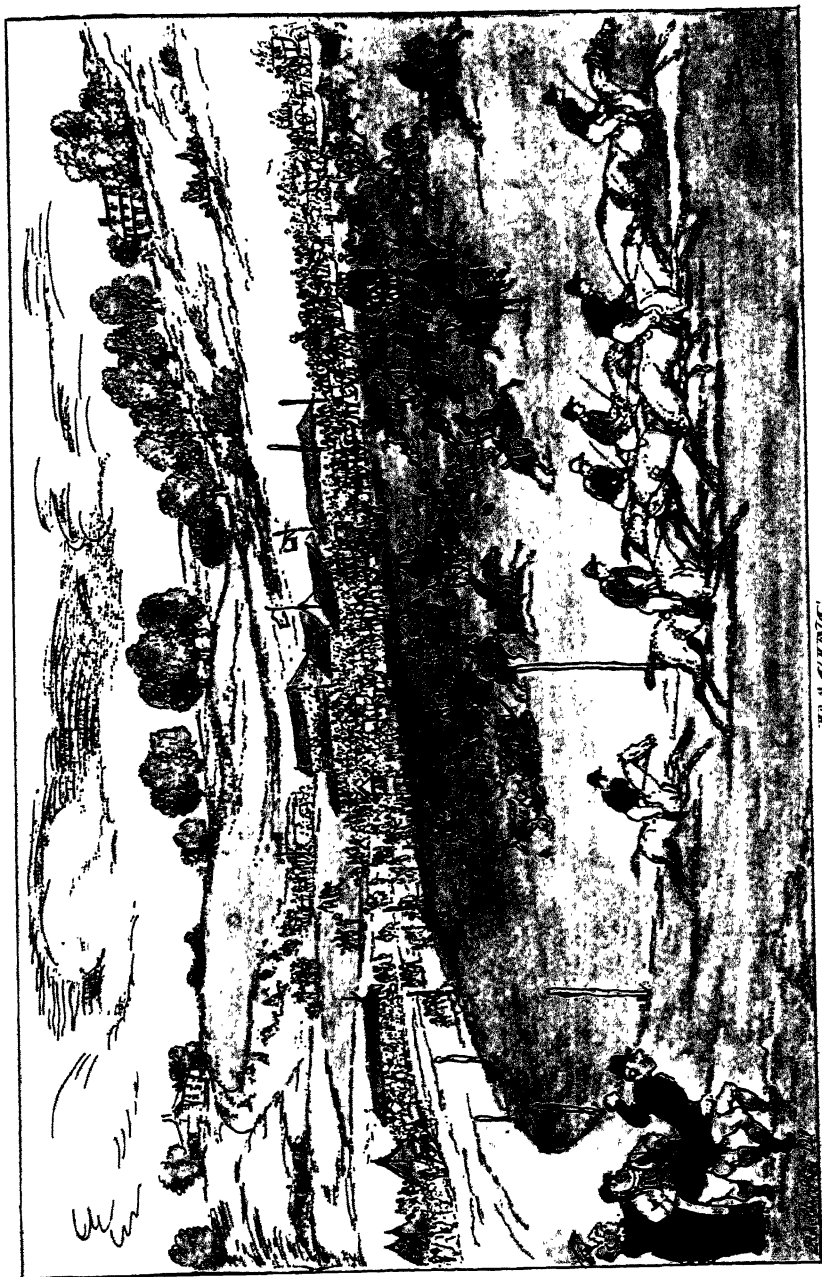


A TWO O'CLOCK ORDINARY.

15. A TWO O'CLOCK ORDINARY



A PENNY BARBER. *London Publ. by W. E. Lockhart 1859. Oxford. 1860.*



RACING

big demand for cartoons. Naturally one with his maturing talent for lampooning wanted to enlist in a fight which was the talk of London, and it appears that in the beginning at least the trend of his expression was for liberalism.

The leader of the liberals, Charles James Fox, "champion of the people", was a reformer held by the conservatives to be tainted with ideas of the sort which foster revolutions. He attracted all the stigmatic epithets usually hurled at leaders who depart from the straight and narrow path of conservatism. Fox was somewhat like the late William Jennings Bryan, a powerful orator who could sway the plain people to his side. Now he was campaigning for Parliament in the hotly contested Westminster district of London. He was already a member, and something of a force, and his opponents, the Tories, were worried and frightened, especially when the Duchess of Devonshire went out on the hustings for "the Fox." It was she who set the first example for women to engage in appealing to the electorate. The cartoonists couldn't pass up such a rare opportunity as this. A woman in politics! And out in the open talking to the people!

James Gillray was a year younger than Rowly. They were friendly rivals. In this campaign they did most of the cartoons. Sometimes Rowlandson pictured Fox as a Demosthenes, an eloquent advocate of liberalism, liberty, and truth; but later he portrayed the corpulent, curly black-haired statesman holding the Duchess on his lap—which somehow seemed to question Fox's sincerity. The "champion" was re-elected, however, but afterward became an object of vehement criticism by his own constituents, aided and abetted, of course, by the press and the print cartoonists including Rowlandson and Gillray. Such popularity as Fox had attained was regarded by many of the guardians of the national wealth as dangerous. The ruling class of England thought it high time for all propagandists to defend the

realm, and take no part in, nor chances with, the wild-fire spread of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity. All the nonsense of "crack-pots" like Jean Jacques Rousseau, Thomas Jefferson, and Thomas Paine had to be discredited.

One of the outstanding cartoons in this campaign was one by Rowlandson entitled *The Devonshire, or the Most Approved Method of Securing Votes*, in which the Duchess is shown greeting a fat and greasy butcher with a kiss. If one were to eliminate from this picture the figure of the butcher and other sordid details, the portrayal of the Duchess would remain as that of a not unattractive person. Rowlandson had no heart to burlesque women. Sometimes he departed from this rule, but never too savagely. As for men he delighted, like Hogarth, in making them as disreputable as possible. Our artist would picture a group of males at a theatre or a political meeting, and hardly one of them would not be a libel upon the average masculine Briton.

XI

It was Rowly's fancy to go on extended jaunts around the countryside. His journeys into Wales and Cornwall and other counties produced for the delectation of people ever since a series of travel studies, idylls of the highway and of obscure hamlets and inns, surpassing at that time anything else done with similar purpose. Numerous prints which resulted from those journeys were published under the title, *An Artist in Search of the Picturesque*, and gave him material which he used in later years for the Dr. Syntax Tours.

Twice he took trips to the Continent with Jack Bannister and Henry Angelo. But he was partial to his native heath. He moved about seeking odd corners of England where artists had not been before, or aspects of life in busy places that had not yet been pictured or at least not overdone—thatched huts on the back

roads, where yokels lived who had never been ten leagues from home; inns with quaint names; wandering tinkers; ancient grave-diggers pausing to rest on their spades; seaports on the Southern coast; intensified shipping on the Thames in war-time; fishing places on that crooked river in days of peace; tree-shaded towns along its curving valley.

On all these wanderings, as in the city, he was free with money. Stopping overnight at an inn, he would call for "Drinks on me for the house. Name your liquor, my friends." With such a man people along the roads would naturally be friendly. They would unbend, would talk about the things uppermost in their minds. Thus the subjects for pictures multiplied.

XII

In 1786 or 1787 he moved to the Pantheon, at 50 Poland street, also in Soho. Subsequently he took up quarters at No. 1 James street, Adelphi, and was no longer so serious an artist as he had been on Wardour street. The bulk of his signed work emanated from the Adelphi studio, where he did the tremendous number of drawings for which he is chiefly known.

But it was not only his own ideas and drawings that kept him busy. He did engraving for so many of his contemporaries that at this distance it seems incredible. Most of this work for his fellow artists, however, was stamped so strongly with his own technique that the etchings when finished could hardly be called a replica of the original design.

Occasionally, too, he was his own publisher. In a corner of a plate would appear in his handwriting: "Designed and published by T. Rowlandson." This became almost as familiar as the imprint of the established print-sellers. But he was of course well known to all London publishers: Rudolph Ackermann, Repository of Arts, 101 Strand; Thomas Tegg, Cheapside; S. W.

Fores, Piccadilly; Samuel Leigh, 18 Strand; and numerous others, including the house of Mrs. H. Humphrey, who published most of Gillray's work but sometimes Rowlandson's.

Apparently no royalties were paid to artists then, the publisher buying the plates outright. A letter written by Gillray in 1789 to Fores indicates the prevailing prices: "For *Falstaff*, £2 2s 0d; for *Pig in a Poke*, £1 11s 6d; for *Bologna Sausage*, £2 2s 6d. Total £5 15s 6d." Presumably payment depended, as it does to-day, not so much on the quality of the craftsman's work as upon the mood of the publisher and the state of his "budget."

Perhaps foremost among the cartoonists for whom Rowly engraved was William Henry Bunbury. This artist's merit lay less in the excellence of his drawings than in his happy faculty for reading character and his rare felicity for pencilling whatever observation or fancy suggested. All this in a scrambling style which was individual. Bunbury was a social favorite, wealthy, and entertained the aristocracy. He is said to have been the one most responsible for introducing Rowly into the high life of London.

Next in importance among those for whom Rowlandson did engraving was George Murgatroyd Woodward, on whose drawings often appear the inscription: *Rowlandson sculpsit*. Woodward came from a provincial town, where he had found diversion in amateur caricaturing, presumably self-taught. Fortified by an annuity from his father, who was a steward for a wealthy land-owner, he came to London to try for fame and to enjoy life. Having a lively sense of jest, and a ready hand with a pencil, his pictures became popular. Merriment was excited among hosts of people by prints of his, such as *Effects of Flattery*, *Effects of Hope*, *Babes in the Wood*, *Raffling for a Coffin*,

He and Rowlandson discovered that they had much in com-

mon. The atmosphere of the taverns appealed to "Mustard" George, as some of his associates dubbed him. (His middle name appears often as *Moutard*, which suggests an alteration made by his drinking companions.) Evenings often found him, in company with Rowly, lingering over tankards of ale in Offley's, or in the *Cider Cellar*, the *Blue Posts*, or the *Hole in the Wall*. In time, however, Woodward found a more alluring haunt, the *Brown Bear*, in Bow street, where he had opportunity to study the city's human flotsam, as it was brought into the lock-up by unpitied constables. Enamored with the society he found in this dark corner of the town, so Henry Angelo tells us, Woodward ultimately took up his residence at the *Brown Bear*, "and there, to the lively grief of these tender-hearted associates, one night died in character, quite suddenly, with a glass of brandy in his hand."

When Rowly was thirty-four or so he had an unpleasant encounter with a public enemy which for a time chilled his usual geniality. Angelo gives us the story, and it is worth repeating in his own words:

"Having walked one night with Rowlandson towards his house, where he lived in Poland street, we parted at the corner. It was then about twelve o'clock, and before he got to the door a man knocked him down, and, placing his knees on his breast, rifled him of his watch and money. The next day he proposed that we should be accompanied by a thief-taker, to try to find him out, as he was certain he should know him again. We first repaired to St. Giles's, Dyot street, and Seven Dials, but all to no avail.

"In one of the night houses, four ill-looking fellows . . . so attracted our attention, that while we sat over our noggin of spirits, as he always carried his sketch-book with him, he made an excellent caricature group of them for me, introducing a

prison in the background. An idea may be formed from the caricature of the different gradations which lead to the gallows—petty larceny, house-breaking, foot-pad, and highway robbery; he afterward finished it for me in his best style, superior to the greater part of his works; this was about 1790. . . .

“The next night a gentleman was robbed in Soho Square in like manner. Soon afterwards several suspicious characters were taken in an office then in Litchfield street, Soho, suspected of street robberies, and Rowlandson and myself went there out of curiosity, accompanied by many others who had been robbed. They were all placed before us, but none were identified. Rowlandson was particularly called upon to look around him, but to no purpose.

“One man in particular made himself more conspicuous than all the others, treating his curiosity with contempt, saying, ‘I defy the gemman to say as how I ever stopped him any *vare*.’

“‘No; but you are very like the description of the ruffian,’ answered Rowlandson, ‘who robbed a gentleman last Wednesday night in Soho Square.’ This was a thunderbolt to the man, who instantly looked pale and trembled. The gentleman was immediately sent for, and as soon as he entered the room, though there were several for examination, he fixed directly upon the man that had been suspected. At the sessions following he was found guilty of robbery, and hanged.

“This pleased my friend mightily; ‘for, though I got knocked down,’ said he, ‘and lost my watch and money, and did not find the thief, I have been the means of hanging *one* man. Come, that’s doing something.’”

XIII

One day Mitchell, the banker, who had put on more and more weight with the years, had just come from the St. James street

studio, where he had been foraging among Rowly's sketches for his collection. Outside, a short distance away, he was hailed by Caleb Whiteford, wine merchant, and vice-president of the Society for the Encouragement of the Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce. Yes, they had such a society even then. Whiteford inquired about the artist.

“It kills me to climb his stairs,” said Mitchell. “Why will he live so high? I never go up, bless the man! but I find something new, and am tempted to pull my purse-strings. His invention, his humor, his oddity, are exhaustless. . . . I should not be surprised if he is taking a bird's-eye view of you and me at this moment and marking us down for game. I know not to what to compare his prolific fancy, unless it be the ever-increasing population!”

Rowlandson was modern in the sense that he could respond to a call for a cartoon to be sold upon the streets next day. This journalistic ability was of course fraught with the danger of his becoming repetitious and falling into hack production. He was known to draw two cartoons a day and wash in his water color on the proof sheets to guide the fast copyists who put the finishing touches on an edition for distribution. This rapidity is not so remarkable in itself—our modern cartoonists are prolific—but even on emergency work, Rowlandson preferred to do his own engraving. He could produce, or over-produce, and alas! often did the latter, so full of vitality was he and so sure of projecting his ideas across the delineative footlights to an eager public. He had money enough to take life easily at that time, and he was not money-mad, but a torrent cannot be blamed for acting like a torrent.

However much of a free-for-all he was in politics and ethics, he was sensitive and conscientious in his art. Frequently he would make the rounds of his publishers to see that the printers

and colorists were doing justice to his originals. It is easy to imagine him suggesting and correcting, alternately elated and disappointed at the manner in which his brain-children were being presented to the world.

As an ally of Rowlandson for years, Rudolph Ackermann is worthy of more than a passing mention, for not only did he befriend Thomas in his work by valuable advice and encouragement, but was his principal publisher. Were it not for the practical co-operation given by Ackermann, a German-born altruist, perhaps this artist would not now be so well-known. There is no question that Ackermann had a strong and helpful influence over Rowly, especially in the caricaturist's latter years when he, like so many others, was shaken by dark fears of running dry.

Alone in the world, without what is called home comforts, his expense was himself. He had managed to save a sizable portion of his aunt's legacy. But there were times after he was fifty when he had had his shaky moments, when there was a twinge of rheumatism in a leg or a moment of dizziness as he climbed the stairs. Would the money he had in hand last him until the end? Would his productive facility continue? And even if it did, might not his popularity go into complete eclipse as the years rolled along? Younger men were coming into the field. Suppose some day he were numbered among his needy contemporaries. There were many such in London, men who had started with roseate skies before them. Over near the Strand in cheap lodgings was William Blake, writing, etching, engraving, and generally worried about making ends meet; there was William Combe, the freelance writer, living in the debtors' prison; and numerous others, who were weighted down by poverty—and who are now mostly forgotten. Were they mediocrities? Who knows? But mediocre or inspired, a fuller life, a decent security, would have helped to put them into their rightful place as artists.

One of the few letters from Rowlandson which have been preserved indicates that he was anxious about the state of his finances when he was nearing the age of forty-eight. Thus:

No. 1 James Street, Adelphi,
March 1st, 1804.

Friend Heath:

'Tis with sorrow I relate that my own finances and the little sway I have with the long pursed gentry—obliges me to retire before the plays are ended. I hope you will not say, as they do at Drury, (No money returned after the curtain is drawn up.)

The bill sent in says Nine Numbers, Eight only have been received, the Ninth mentioned in your letter as having been delivered November the First, since my return to town, has, through some mistake, never come to hand. I also possess a receipt from you for £2 2s od, and as I hope you call me a tradesman and poor, you will make me out a fresh bill, and that we shall verify the old proverb of Short Reckonings make Long Friends.

I remain sincerely yours,
Thos Rowlandson.

XIV

The Dictionary of National Biography, in an article credited to Austin Dobson, quotes the *Gentleman's Magazine* as saying that in 1800 Rowlandson married a Miss Stuart of Camberwell, Surrey. But that periodical simply lists the marriage of a "Thomas Rowlandson, Esq., of Watling street", and he was a warehouse man whose name appears in old London directories. Nor do any of those who knew Rowly mention him in their writings as other than a single man. Yet he must have weighed the values in wedded existence for the creative worker, and per-

haps turned back from the pitfalls he saw there. He had known others who had essayed to combine marriage and art, and had seen them go down in defeat.

The bitter realities of such a failure are crowded into his colored etching, *The Chamber of Genius*. With good reason this is thought to be a visualization of himself as he would have looked had he been poor, encumbered with a family and trying to work in surroundings in which he had seen fellow artists: tied to domestic life in one room which served as kitchen, bedroom, parlor, and studio. It is a sympathetic commentary by one who doubtless felt that there but for the grace of God was himself. The face of the artist in the picture strongly resembles Rowlandson. There can be little doubt that this is a caricature portrait of himself, sitting before his easel, emaciated, distraught, trying to create, while the imagined wife lies in bed with a baby, an older youngster is blowing a bellows at the fireplace to keep the room warm, a cat scratches and yowls, and one of the artist's feet has overturned a chamber-pot—altogether a scene of squalid, cluttered distraction.

XV

Eighteen Hundred and Eight saw the appearance of many prints by Rowlandson in a series entitled *Miseries of Human Life*. Then he turned with deliberation to rejoin the attack on Napoleon Bonaparte, in which young George Cruikshank was now enlisted. Gillray had long been in the forefront of that pictorial siege, but had slowed down, and was a tired man, full of doubts and forebodings.

Ackermann was thinking of starting a magazine, and the idea appealed to Rowly, for it would mean a regular outlet for his pictures and a fairly regular income—if the publication met with approval.

But the artist needed diversion, and he set off for a tour in Cornwall and Devonshire with a stout friend who remains unidentified. When he returned he had plenty of miscellaneous sketches, but no clear idea how to utilize them to advantage. Shortly after he came back he dined in a tavern with Jack Bannister, long famous as a comedian, and some third person. One of them asked Rowly what he was working on just then.

"Nothing in particular just now," he answered. "My inventive faculty has been sluggish of late. I wish you fellows would give me a hint."

What sort of hint?

Rowly explained. He thought of a possible series, based on the tour lately made, and using the comic adventures which had befallen his companion, a series in which the central character could be made ridiculous "without much thinking." But what could he do with such a hero as the man with whom he had traveled? "A walking turtle", Rowly called him; for such scenes he must have a man of a totally different description.

Bannister's eyes lighted up, according to his biographer, John Adolphus.

"I have it!" the actor said. "Make him a skin-and-bone hero, a pedantic old prig, in a shovel hat, with a pony, sketching tools, and rattletraps, and place him in such scrapes as travelers frequently meet with—hedge ale-houses, second and third rate inns, thieves, gibbets, mad bulls, and the like." Calling for a sheet of paper, Bannister proceeded to expand his theme. Quickly Rowly saw new light. Again his pencil hand went to work with deft strokes. Together the three nursed the idea. There must have been chuckles, and hearty laughter, and calls for more drinks, as the trio dilated upon all the fantastic things which might befall a serious-minded professor on the highways and byways of England.

Out of that animated exchange, perhaps in the *Turk's Head* or in *The Man Loaded With Mischief*, grew a series celebrating the wanderings of a nineteenth century Don Quixote called Dr. Syntax.

Ackermann now started the periodical he had been talking about. He entitled it *The Poetical Magazine*. To the initial issue, in 1809, Rowlandson contributed the first installment of drawings in the Syntax series, under the caption *The School Master's Tour*. William Combe was commissioned by Ackermann to supply the text, writing "around" the pictures, rhyming, moralizing, and satirizing in the Samuel Butler style of the time. No one today seems interested in Combe, and the style of the Syntax verses is now obsolete. But Combe was a voluminous writer of material for books, magazines, and newspapers, and people who knew him left word that there never was a man with a finer personality. He wrote under many a *nom de plume*, usually because creditors were on his trail. While doing the Syntax text he was still an inmate of the debtors' prison.

The series continued for two years, Rowlandson doing three colored etchings a month. He did not know Combe; they met for the first time after twenty-four months of collaboration. In all likelihood Rowlandson regularly sent suggestions to Combe with the drawings, via the publisher.

Following its serial appearance, the story of the eccentric professor's journey was brought out in book form under the title *The Tour of Dr. Syntax in Search of the Picturesque*. It met with wide favor, and a few years later Ackermann commissioned the artist and writer to do more of the same. *Dr. Syntax in Search of Consolation* was a second series, and then a third and last tour, *Dr. Syntax in Search of a Wife*. Somebody also issued a volume concerning Dr. Syntax in London, in the manner of Rowlandson and Combe, but not by either. There were numer-

ous editions of the original three books, and parodies on them by imitators who essayed to cash in on their fame.

The first volume of the Syntax series was also brought out in Berlin in 1822; and a French edition appeared in Paris about the same time. In America some of the plates were re-engraved from Rowlandson's drawings, and published by William Charles, a caricaturist and etcher who also had a Repository of Arts in Philadelphia, named after Ackermann's establishment in London. Charles likewise re-engraved and printed for American collectors Rowlandson's well-known prints, *Connoisseurs*, and *Nollekens the Sculptor*.

XVI

Though the parliamentary election cartoons of 1784 and the Syntax pictures had made Rowlandson's name widely known, a still greater popularity came to him in 1809. There was a scandal in high life which perturbed the royal family, and for a time threatened to shake the throne of England. It was known as "The Clarke Scandal" or "The Delicate Investigation." Rumors of fraud in army circles compelled the House of Commons to institute a searching inquiry. Mary Anne Clarke, captivating adventuress, was at the bottom of the intrigue which led to the disclosures, in which the Duke of York was implicated.

Here was fresh opportunity for the cartoonists to bring the theory of "Divine Right" down to earth. The Duke's affairs with Mrs. Clarke, the saccharine letters he wrote to her, and the money he lavished on her, gave the satirists in literature and art a shining target, just as in later years they attacked an aristocrat and member of Parliament, Lord Byron, for alleged immoral conduct. The public likes to see a moral wave come dashing up now and then, to wash away sin from conspicuous places. It makes the everyday sinner feel better.

Watching this scandal unfold, Rowlandson whimsically conceived the idea that nobody was safe from degradation, not even the prudish Quakers, so long as there were high jinks among those who should set an example for probity. Among his many cartoons on that affair, is one which shows a Quaker being urged, evidently by the notorious Mrs. Clarke herself, to come into her house. He is saying: "Woman, avaunt! I am not to be tempted. And be it known also, I am a married man. . . ."

When that episode was out of the way our artist resumed his attack on Napoleon Bonaparte, the "Upstart Corsican", the "Bloody Boney", who had been wheeling his guns around the thrones of Europe—a menace to the peace of the world, or at any rate, a menace to the peace of royalty until he put a crown on his own head and spoiled the picture for his faithful followers.

Gillray's cartoons were grim and bitter; Rowlandson's had bite, but were humorous—perhaps the more effective on that account. Although it is said that the two men sometimes collaborated on a picture-indictment of "the mad dog of Europe", Rowlandson's own were many, and he drew anti-Napoleonic cartoons intermittently until the Emperor's exile to St. Helena.

The two pictorial wizards met now and then in the taverns or the coffee-houses. They were known to the people in the neighborhood of their studios as "the artists who make those comical pictures of 'Bonyparty' and sporting scenes." They were regarded as different from the common run of folk, but not from any outward show on their part. No one paid them any especial homage, nor were they the kind to want it. Few persons climbed the stairs to see Rowly—they knew he was busy—unless perchance a foreman from the printer's might call to consult with him about proofs. But Mitchell, Bannister, and Angelo had the right of way, as did Bunbury, and Rowly was always glad to see any of them.

Not far from the living and working quarters of Gillray and Rowlandson were three taverns where the beverages were delectable and the company agreeable—*The Bell*, *The Coal Hole*, and *The Coach and Horses*. One whose path also led to these haunts was W. H. Pyne, who under the name of Ephraim Hardcastle, wrote a column called “Chitchat” in the *Somerset House Gazette*, earliest of English fine art reviews. He has preserved for us his memories of the scene—Rowlandson sitting at his ease at a table, still more or less jovial; Gillray gloomy.

“They would,” Pyne writes, “perhaps exchange half a dozen questions and answers upon the affairs of copper and *aqua fortis*; swear all the world was one vast masquerade, and then enter into the common chat of the room, smoke their cigars, drink their punch, and sometimes early, sometimes late, shake hands at the door, look up at the stars, and say ‘It’s a frosty night’, and depart, one for the Adelphi, the other to St. James’s street, each to his bachelor bed.” Doubtless they would vary the observation on the weather according to the season.

In that time all pictures of which multiple copies were needed had to be made “by hand” and shown to the public in etchings, steel engravings, mezzotints, woodcuts, and lithography—the latter being still in an experimental stage. Demand for pictures was greater than the supply, chiefly because of the slow processes of reproduction. But even then, artists and engravers were plentiful and most of them poor. Rowlandson was an exception.

Three flights up, in a large room at 1 James street, he could be found, when not at the printer’s or away for a few weeks in response to wanderlust. There in his studio he could be seen working on a copper plate covered with a hard varnish. All around him were more plates, paper, prints, stacks of reed and quill pens which had to be kept sharpened, brushes, etching needles, burnishers, roulettes, burins, and other tools and mate-

rials required in his profession. Sometimes he made a preliminary sketch with a reed pen dipped in a mixture of vermilion and India ink; more often he would draw directly on the plate, where a mistake might be exceedingly difficult to correct. In those days, to make a cartoon ready for printing called for the patience of a plowman plowing lines in copper, steel, or wood. And yet the drawings of Rowlandson appear to be the work of one who swung his pen and etching needle just to toy with the laughing hours, with no mechanical or technical problems to overcome.

XVII

Gillray began etching his last plate some time in 1810, but it was weeks or months before he finished it. He was already going into a mental haze. For several years he had been the lodger, or guest, of Mrs. Humphrey at 27 St. James's street. He was supposed to work for her exclusively during this period, but there is evidence that he supplied plates to other publishers, disguising his style.

This brilliant artist, whose caricatures had done so much to render Napoleon contemptuous in the eyes of the world, went to pieces in 1811. Henceforth he was a gray ghost sitting motionless for hours, staring at his friends vacantly, vowing over and over again that "nothing is right." For four years this phantom clung to life with his thin hands, getting a drink where he could, promising himself and Mrs. Humphrey and any one else he met that he was "going to do a great picture *tomorrow*."

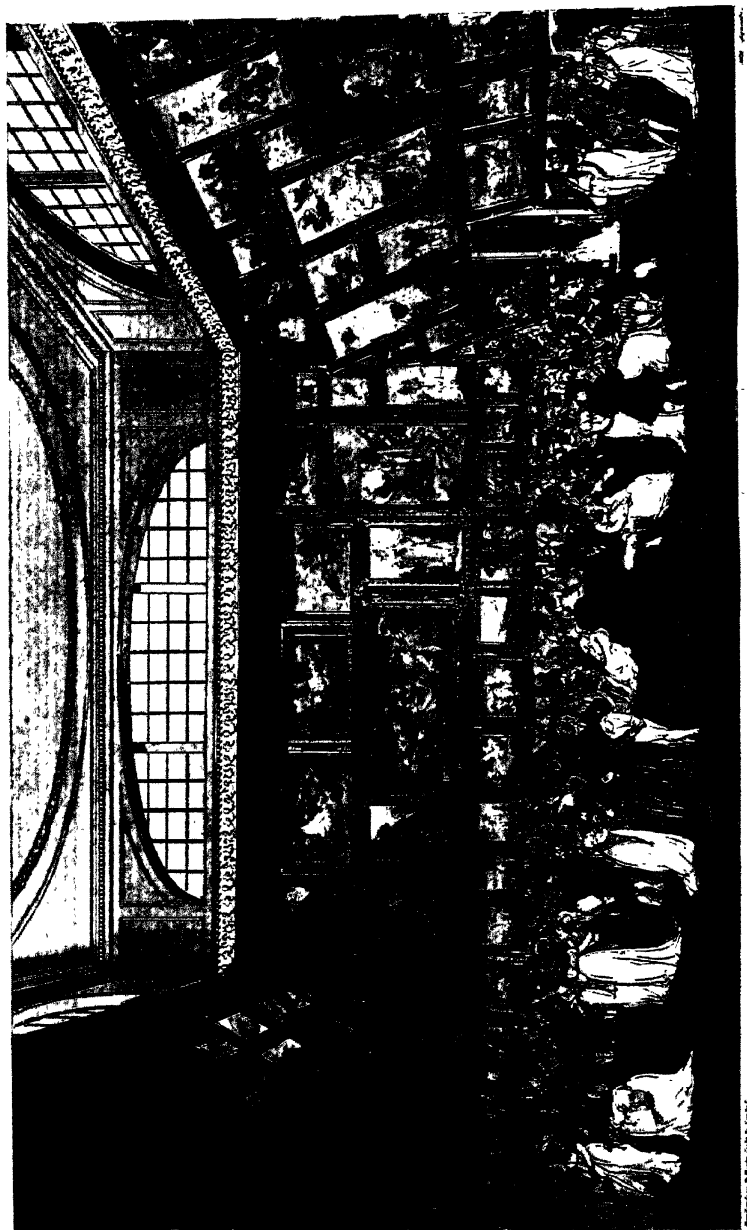
Napoleon marched with 400,000 soldiers across the bitter wastes of Russia to Moscow, found that city in flames, and came back with only 20,000 men. But the news meant nothing to Gillray. The British forces moved into France, Paris was surrendered to the Allies, and Napoleon abdicated and was exiled to Elba. Mrs. Humphrey's guest only shook his head. Napoleon



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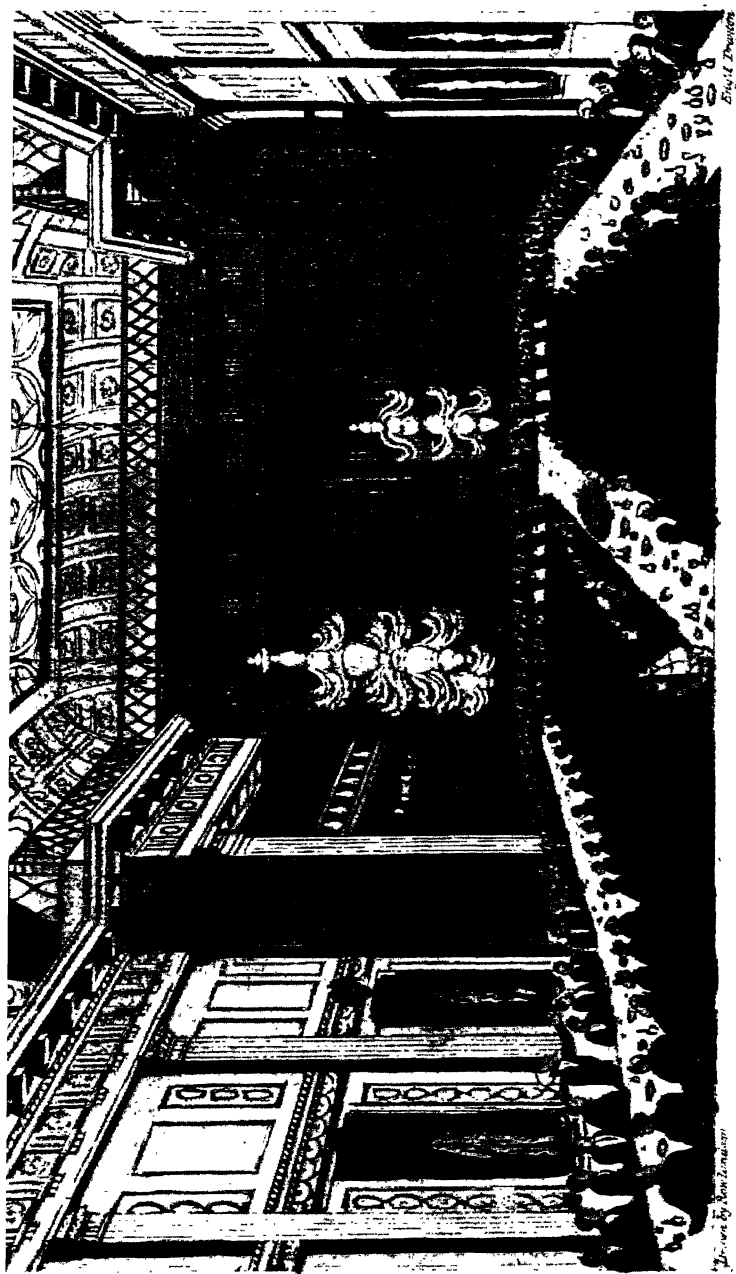


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EXHIBITION ROOM, SOMERSET HOUSE.

18. EXHIBITION ROOM, SOMERSET HOUSE



DR. SYNTAX AT FREE MASON'S HALL,

19. DR. SYNTAX AT FREE MASON'S HALL

THE GIG SHOP OR KICKING UP A BREEZE AT NELL HAMILTON'S HOP.



Illustration by J. C. Hamilton.

THE GIG SHOP OR KICKING UP A BREEZE AT NELL HAMILTON'S HOP.

20. THE GIG SHOP OR KICKING UP A BREEZE AT NELL HAMILTON'S HOP



INTRUSION ON STUDY OR THE PAINTER DISTURBED.

21. INTRUSION ON STUDY OR THE PAINTER DISTURBED



22. THE PIANO LESSON



It is in vain that you decide.
Death claims you as his destined bride.

23. IT IS IN VAIN THAT YOU DECIDE DEATH CLAIMS YOU AS HIS DESTIN'D BRIDE



24. AFTER THE QUARREL



The Sculptor

Rowlandson

escaped from his island prison, returned to France, and again rallied the army to his standard.

But James Gillray was past caring. He was living in a world of shadows. Seventeen days before the "Corsican upstart" met his downfall at Waterloo, Gillray died in the Humphrey home. For days as he lay muttering about the past, Mistress Humphrey and her maid Betty had attended him with solicitous care. Young George Cruikshank, who was now making cartoons for the Humphrey establishment, was one of the little group which followed Gillray to the grave.

We may well believe that the wrecking of this veteran's mind, and his long slow death, had a depressing effect upon Rowlandson. He was now fifty-nine, a year older than Gillray. There was plenty to ponder upon in that tragedy. It was far easier to understand why Bonaparte went down than to fathom this fellow artist's dissolution.

Was it sadness over Gillray's end which kept Rowly from doing much work in June, 1815? *Finis* was written for his friend on the first day of that month. Certainly with the eventful happenings in France there was plenty for the topical cartoonists to do just then. But in the list of 990 satiric pictures in the principal collections of such art, given by A. M. Broadley in his excellent *Napoleon in Caricature*, one finds among many Rowlandson prints only two between May 1 and July 1. The first of these is *Vive le Roi! Vive l'Empereur!*, brought out by Ackermann in May, and Ackermann's Transparency on Waterloo, dated June 22. The latter was a large poster which hung in front of the Ackermann establishment at the time of the general illuminations celebrating the Corsican's downfall.

With Napoleon safely marooned on the island of St. Helena, the number of cartoons attacking him of course fell off materially, though they continued sporadically during the next six

years until he also died. Rowlandson did some of these, but George Cruikshank now took the lead, as he did in caricaturing generally.

XVIII

There was now little of importance happening, either in England or in other countries, to call for news cartoons. Rowly found less to inspire his pen. There were long intervals when he did nothing, waited for ideas that were slow to come. Travel had ceased to interest him. Journeys across country would simply be repetitions of past journeys, as his day-to-day life was a repetition of things done before. Events were duplicates of bygone events, conversations were echoes of yester-year's talk; the cries of London, which once had music in them, now grated upon his eardrums; the ale at *The Hole in the Wall* lacked its old tang.

He was living simply now, not in stingy fashion, but counting his funds more carefully. Long since he had ceased to gamble, for he must keep in mind his old age. What a lot of money had gone from him over the green board, and with what nonchalance he had seen it go! What a youth he had had!

Ackermann and he met less often in these days, though the publisher was always friendly. But it was in this period that the second and third Tours of Dr. Syntax were developed and issued. Combe again wrote the text. He was nearly eighty, and still in the debtors' prison, but turning out many sheets of verse or prose, as the occasion demanded, in a day. And Henry Fuseli was close to eighty also, but was going on with his lectures in the Royal Academy.

Combe died in 1823; Fuseli in 1825, having delivered a final course of lectures in his eighty-fourth year. Blake, a year younger than Rowly, was still struggling along, with his faithful wife standing by.

Rowlandson was no longer well. His physical machinery was creaking, but he kept on with his etchings, determined to work out rather than rust out. Death came when he was seventy-one, in 1827. Summing up his achievements then, W. H. Pyne wrote: "He has covered with his never-flagging pencil enough of *charta pura* to placard the whole walls of China, and etched as much copper as would sheathe the British Navy."

In his will he left all his worldly goods, his home, and £3,000, to his housekeeper, described as a spinster. Among those at his funeral were the two friends of his youth, Jack Bannister and Henry Angelo, and Rudolph Ackermann. The obituaries of the time fail to tell where he was buried. . . . But he needs no headstone. His pictures are his enduring memorial.

XIX

Does not the high quality of Rowlandson's painting and etching, and his joy in work, prove that having a substantial income does not necessarily result in a lack of ambition to succeed when one is an artist to the very core of his being? But suppose want and neglect had been Rowlandson's lot, especially in the formative years of his development? It is hard to believe that the boy from Old Jewry could then have achieved such a lofty place in pictorial expression, and that he would have been the energetic, mature Rowlandson, producing his best pictures with pleasure in the doing, almost to his three score and ten. Indeed the life of this man, under different circumstances, might have been one of frustrations and discouragements too hard to bear. There is no bigger lie hurled at discouraged artists by the smug critics than "Genius will always find its way through the direst poverty." Of course, it has been done, but at what cost to the genius, no one else can know. Poverty is stifling, and having too much money also can be stifling, but most paralyzing to the creative faculties

is poverty. If it ever acts as an incentive, it is more often destructive.

It is impossible within the limits of this monograph to more than mention some of Rowlandson's principal achievements in graphic art. I have already commented on a few of his drawings in the lighter vein and his cartoons in the parliamentary election campaign of 1784 and other historic events. But his political caricatures are few compared with his *genre* and scenic depictions and social satires.

One of the earliest series he did in the latter category was *The Comforts of Bath*. Here his jovial eye caught life at a health resort as it was then, and pretty much as it is today and no doubt as it will be tomorrow. His handling of crowds has never been equalled, except by Gustave Doré, who was in some respects his debtor. The concerts in the hotels, the wheel chairs, the horseback riding, the bathing, and everything else familiar at health resorts of our own time, is in the Rowlandson round-up, with one slight difference: the old man with the gout whose legs are tied up to look like huge bags, no longer shows his bundled extremities in public, as he did in that era. Looking over the prints of the comedy-draftsmen of that day, it appears that none of them could refrain from making fun of the gout.

Soon after the health resort series had set the English public laughing, their creator brought out *Miseries of Life* under Ackermann's auspices. Rowlandson's miseries include having to follow a slow cart on horseback through an endless narrow lane when you are in a hurry; being persuaded to lead in a country dance when you know that a bear would surpass you in grace and agility; escorting four or five country cousins on their first visit to London; dining and passing a whole evening with a party of fox-hunters after they have had what they call "a glorious time"; chasing your hat through a muddy street; squatting

plump on an unsuspecting cat in your chair; and so on in an extended run of delightful drawings.

One notable book of etchings by the same artist and promoted by the same publisher was *The Microcosm of London*, containing 104 aquatint plates. These are rendered with a wholesome variety of scene that was "the Rowlandson way." Groups of people, moving or still, costumes, character, trees, architecture—all were his to conjure up from memory at will.

The best artists had to have retentive memories. Photographs would have been useful to verify detail when memory failed, and, as we have admitted, the camera has its uses. But Rowlandson's discriminating observation and remarkable memory made him a valuable asset to the publishers, and especially to the Repository of Arts, the proprietor of which appreciated these qualities as well as the artist's integrity in their business relations.

Augustus Charles Pugin, an architectural draftsman, was assigned to collaborate with Rowlandson on this work. Ordinarily such a collaboration is apt to be a liability. There is always likelihood of discord in a dual production by artists. But this combination of talent was a happy one. Pugin was not only competent, he was masterly in the accuracy and care he devoted to the backgrounds; and Rowlandson's handling of life and movement here is memorable. He assembled his men, women, children, and domestic animals, like a good stage director, making them act as he had seen them act in reality. And all of these prints were done in superb coloring.

Two pictures in the *Microcosm* which are unforgettable are *Students in the Royal Academy* and *The Royal Cockpit*. In the former we view a scene in the life class as it must have been in Rowly's day, men of varying ages sketching from a huge male model—tall slim young men and older men not so slim, all in knee breeches and coats of varying colors. In the other the faces of

Londoners of several social levels reveal varying degrees of excitement as they crowd around the arena in St. James's Park where feathered gladiators fight to the death with beak and spur.

XX

Be it noted that Rowlandson never made a really tragic picture, save where tragedy was linked with comedy. He could depict sadness and he was sympathetic with the despondent and distressed, but stark tragedy was not in his repertoire. Holbein in his *Dance of Death* drawings, and other artists, had shown Death capering in at unexpected moments, reminding people in the midst of their gay pursuits that life is serious and the end a hole in the earth. But Rowlandson took the solemnity out of the Holbein interpretation.

Fear is one emotion which always gives the humorists of pen or pencil opportunity to be funny. A skeleton in a picture may be uncanny, but Rowlandson didn't mind. A statesman crawling under a bed, a cat with a fit upsetting a household, the trembling "O my God!" shock and prostration caused by some violent intrusion—are these not stock themes from one generation to another? As for Death with his clicking laugh, he is ever rude and disconcerting to those who do not philosophize. They expect Old Rattlebones to send in his card, or at least wait a while and not interrupt a man while he dozes after stuffing a bilious body with rich food, or disturb him while he is having a good time chasing a fox or counting over a bag of gold.

William Combe wrote the verse to accompany Rowlandson's *Dance of Death*. Later there was a companion piece, *Dance of Life*, on which the two again worked jointly, but it was not so well done nor so popular as the *macabre* production.

While on the subject of fear—there is a Rowlandson drawing in the Metropolitan Museum called *The Overdrove Ox*, a scene

on Westminster Bridge. The animal has broken loose from his driver in a frenzied protest against ill-treatment and drudgery. He is running amuck, head down with horns pointed toward the back of a galloping fat man only one jump ahead, while all around is rampant consternation. Women faint and sprawl headlong, showing in true Rowlandson playfulness some bare part of their bodies; peddlers and their baskets are tossed about; a wooden-legged man tries to leap out of the chaos on crutches. Horses attached to a coach are rearing and the passengers within are in a panic. Some of those endangered attempt to climb the stone side-wall of the bridge. The poor old ox is having one mad moment of freedom.

An attempt to kill the king in 1800 led Rowly to do a patriotic etching entitled *Britannia's Protection, or Loyalty Triumphant*. In this George III stands firm while Britannia with shield outstretched to protect him, is striking with her spear at the assassin Hatfield, who has dropped his pistol and is slinking down.

There is a long list of authors' works in which the illustrations bear the well-known signature of our artist, including: Samuel Butler's *Hudibras*, James Boswell's *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*, the miscellaneous writings of Tobias George Smollett, *The Surprising Adventures of Baron Munchausen*, and Oliver Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield*.

For the publisher Samuel Leigh he etched fifty-four plates which were printed as *Rowlandson's Characteristic Sketches of the Lower Orders*. Variegated occupations of persons engaged in humble ways of making a living are shown by the separate captions: *Drayman, Chairs to Mend, Distressed Sailors, Sweeps, Sweet Lavender, Shoe Black, Strawberries, Tinker, Postman, Dog's Meat, Door Mats, Flounders*, and kindred others.

Often in the endless roster of this man's creations the device of contrast is used in two pictures to hang side by side, or in a

single scene: *Nap in the Country, Nap in Town, Courtship in High Life, Courtship in Low Life, Luxury and Misery*. With equal understanding he depicted the nobility in a drawing room or tough sailors in the fo'c'sle of a ship.

XXI

Rowlandson and his contemporaries were the forerunners in political and social caricature as it developed later in England, the Continent, and North America. Rowlandson was the leading cartoonist of England in his day and recognized as such, but as is always the case with those who have rivals—with reservations. Hogarth before him, as well as Gillray, Bunbury, Woodward, and Isaac Cruikshank and others of the time, was rated high and sometimes higher. As the years passed faster and easier processes of printing were devised and tried out. It was found that the artist no longer need be an expert engraver beside being a designer, and that color didn't have to be brushed on by hand.

Punch was born in London in 1841, fourteen years after Rowlandson's death. From the cover design by Richard Doyle (Conan Doyle's uncle) to the many outline drawings through the pages of the first ten years of that weekly, there is much that is reminiscent, if not plagiaristic, of Rowly.

Charles Philipon in Paris, also something of a caricaturist, was alert to the increasing demand for comedy and satire in pictures. Philipon followed Ackermann's example, and established himself as printer and publisher. The best artists found they could make a living by entertaining the public, and Philipon would keep them from starving as Ackermann and other print-sellers had done. It was Philipon who published the *Robert Macaire* series by Honoré Daumier. Philipon issued colored prints and comic papers, in addition to serious illustrated weeklies. Doré, Gavarni, Grandville, Raffet, and many others worked in Philipon's plant, mostly in lithography.

After the copper-plate period of reproduction, the English artists for some unknown reason preferred to draw on the wood block for fast printing. On the other hand, their French cousins did most of their work with the wax pencil on stone. The mark that Rowlandson had made on American cartooning was most evident around 1875 to 1890, when the colored humorous weeklies, *The Wasp*, *Puck*, *Judge*, *Truth*, and kindred publications appeared. *The Wasp* was first, in San Francisco; then *Puck*, then *Judge* and *Truth* in New York; and various others followed. Often the cover, back, and double center pages were given over to single cartoons in color on topical subjects having to do with manners and customs, but generally with politics. In Paris, Vienna, and Barcelona colored cartoons also were used in political papers. In the latter city in 1870 a weekly called *La Flacca* was printed from the stone in three colors.

The American cartoons for the new fast printing presses, though done by able craftsmen—most of whom were foreign-born, and had set up their homes in the land of the free—lacked the intimacy of the Rowlandson prints, which had a look of being hand-made. Nor did these same cartoons have the vivacity and fervor which the man who did so much to blaze the way put into his work.

XXII

It is not greater facility that is needed by the artist of pronounced talent in this twentieth century, but the leisure to refrain from producing work in which he has no real interest. Leonardo da Vinci was often accused of loafing, but Leonardo could not do his best under pressure. Leisure is as much a necessity to the inventive mind as hard, exacting labor, and leisure to spare can do no harm. Rowlandson frequently relaxed and sought diversion, largely in travel. Although much that his tur-

bulent brain produced was superfluous, it must be conceded that the bulk of his work was among the best in the Georgian period of the graphic arts. Time is deleting from his prolific output that which is below the high standard he set for himself. His serious etchings and humorous cartoons have found their way, and are still finding their way, to discriminating collectors, private and public, in all parts of the world.

As the pendulum of history swings, it is not improbable that some day we shall see a revival of political and social cartoons in color by artists of advanced thought, reproduced by efficient modern engraving and printing methods. If or when this comes to pass, one hopes that they will have something of the poetic imagery, artistic feeling, and love of life that made Rowlandson pre-eminent in his chosen field. Helped by fortunate circumstances and a natural passion for work to win his high place, he is a favorite today among those who recognize the qualities which make a picture live despite the passage of years and the changing tides of popularity.

—::— THE END —::—

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